

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (previously presented) An electrophotographic apparatus comprising a plurality of image forming devices each comprising a photosensitive drum provided on a surface thereof with a photosensitive layer, a charging device for having the photosensitive layer charged at a predetermined electric potential, an exposure device for subjecting the photosensitive layer to exposure on the basis of image data to form an electrostatic latent image, and a developing device for adhering toner to the electrostatic latent image on the photosensitive drum to form a toner image, and wherein

the plurality of image forming devices are arranged vertically along a straight portion of an endless intermediate transfer belt, which is stretched around a drive roller and a driven roller to revolve, or of a medium conveyance belt in such a manner that each photosensitive drum is in contact with an outer peripheral surface of the straight portion to transfer the toner image formed on the photosensitive drum through the intermediate transfer belt or directly to a medium to form a color image, and wherein

each developing device comprises a tip end part and a toner storage part, coupled to the tip end part, to store toner, said tip end part comprising a developing roller in contact with the photosensitive drum to rotate to form a thin toner layer on a surface of the photosensitive drum, a supplying roller for supplying toner to the developing roller, and a toner regulatory blade brought into linear contact with an outer peripheral surface of the developing roller at a predetermined pressure to form a thin toner layer on the surface of the photosensitive drum, and wherein

a thickness of the tip end part of each developing device in a direction

of movement of the intermediate transfer belt or the medium conveyance belt is smaller than a thickness of the toner storage part in the direction of movement, and wherein

each exposure device is arranged near the tip end part of each developing device, each exposure device comprising an LED array arranged in a widthwise direction of an associated photosensitive drum.

2. (withdrawn) The electrophotographic apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the toner regulatory blade extends in a direction along a normal to the straight portion of the intermediate transfer belt or of the medium conveyance belt and arranged so as to come into contact with the developing roller from a direction following rotation of the developing roller.

3. (previously presented) The electrophotographic apparatus according to claim 1, wherein a sum of thickness of the tip end part of the developing device and thickness of the toner storage part in the direction of movement of the intermediate transfer belt or the medium conveyance belt is at most 2 times a diameter of the photosensitive drum.

4. (currently amended) The electrophotographic apparatus according to claim-3\_1, wherein in a space formed by the tip end part of the developing device and the toner storage part of the developing device of a first image forming device of said plurality of image forming devices, the exposure device and the charging device of said first image forming device, or the exposure device and the charging device of a second image forming device which is arranged adjacent to said first image forming device for a different color are arranged.

5. (previously presented) The electrophotographic apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the tip end part of the developing device is fixed to a body of the

electrophotographic apparatus and only the toner storage part of the developing device is detachably mounted in the body of the electrophotographic apparatus.

6. (withdrawn)An electrophotographic apparatus comprising a plurality of image forming means comprising a photosensitive drum provided on a surface thereof with a photosensitive layer, charging means for having the photosensitive layer charged at a predetermined electric potential, exposure means for subjecting the photosensitive layer to exposure on the basis of image data to form an electrostatic latent image, and developing means for adhering toner to the electrostatic latent image on the photosensitive drum to form a toner image, and wherein

the plurality of image forming means are arranged in contact with the photosensitive drums with an outer peripheral surface of a straight portion of an endless intermediate transfer belt, which is stretched around a drive roller and a driven roller to revolve, or a medium conveyance belt, and are overlapped one another along said straight portion to transfer toner images formed on the plurality of photosensitive drums, through the intermediate transfer belt, or directly to a medium to form a color image, and wherein

the developing means comprises a tip end part of a developing means and a toner storage part coupled to the tip end part of the developing means to store toner, said tip end part comprising a developing roller in contact with the photosensitive drum to rotate to form a thin toner layer on a surface of the photosensitive drum, a supplying roller for supplying toner to the developing roller, and a toner regulatory blade brought into linear contact with an outer peripheral surface of the developing roller at a predetermined pressure to form a thin toner layer on the surface of the photosensitive drum, and wherein

the toner regulatory blade extends in a direction along a normal to the straight portion of the intermediate transfer belt or of the medium conveyance belt and arranged so as to come into contact with the developing roller from a direction following rotation of the developing roller.

7. (withdrawn)The electrophotographic apparatus according to claim 6, wherein the toner regulatory blade is made of a spring plate formed with at least one bend, and  
the toner regulatory blade is brought into contact with the developing roller at a position between about 10° and about 60° from a vertical line passing through the axis of the developing roller toward an upstream direction of rotation of the developing roller.

8. (withdrawn)The electrophotographic apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the toner regulatory blade has a cross sectional shape of symbol  $\sqrt{\quad}$  having a first bend and a second bend, and

the toner regulatory blade includes a first arm of a predetermined length between the first bend and the second bend and a second arm of a length of several milliliters beyond the second bend, said second bend having a radius of curvature of 0.2 to 1.0 mm.

9. (withdrawn)The electrophotographic apparatus according to claim 8, wherein a space formed by the toner regulatory blade and the developing roller in an upstream direction of rotation of the developing roller has an extent sufficient for toner circulation, and

the predetermined length of said first arm is at least 1.5 mm.

10. (withdrawn)The electrophotographic apparatus according to claim 9, wherein said second bend has an angle of less than 90°, and

an angle formed between the first arm of the toner regulatory blade and a line drawn in parallel to the straight portion of the intermediate transfer belt or of the medium conveyance belt is equal to or larger than an angle formed between a line connecting the center of the developing roller and the contact portion and said parallel drawn line.

11. (withdrawn)The electrophotographic apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the toner regulatory blade is made of a spring material, such as SUS, phosphor bronze, or the like, having a good thermal conductivity.

12. (withdrawn)The electrophotographic apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the toner regulatory blade has coating for inhibiting adherence of toner between the contact portion and a mount portion.

13. (withdrawn) The electrophotographic apparatus according to claim 6, wherein the tip end part of the developing means is fixed to a body of the electrophotographic apparatus and only the toner storage part of the developing means is detachably mounted in the body of the electrophotographic apparatus.

14. (previously presented) An electrophotographic apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the LED array comprises 600 to 1200 LEDs per 1 inch.

15. (previously presented) An electrophotographic apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the toner regulatory blade extends in a direction along a normal to the straight portion of the intermediate transfer belt or of the medium conveyance belt and arranged so as to come into contact with the developing roller from a direction following rotation of the developing roller.

16. (previously presented)The electrophotographic apparatus according to claim 15, wherein the toner regulatory blade is made of a spring plate formed with at least one bend, and the toner regulatory blade is brought into contact with the developing roller

at a position between about 10° and about 60° from a vertical line passing through the axis of the developing roller toward an upstream direction of rotation of the developing roller.

17. (previously presented)The electrophotographic apparatus according to claim 16, wherein the toner regulatory blade has a cross sectional shape of symbol  $\sqrt{\quad}$  having a first bend and a second bend, and the toner regulatory blade includes a first arm of a predetermined length between the first bend and the second bend and a second arm of a length of several milliliters beyond the second bend, said second bend having a radius of curvature of 0.2 to 1.0 mm.

18. (previously presented)The electrophotographic apparatus according to claim 17, wherein a space formed by the toner regulatory blade and the developing roller in an upstream direction of rotation of the developing roller has an extent sufficient for toner circulation, and the predetermined length of said first arm is at least 1.5 mm.

19. (previously presented)The electrophotographic apparatus according to claim 18, wherein said second bend has an angle of less than 90°, and

an angle formed between the first arm of the toner regulatory blade and a line drawn in parallel to the straight portion of the intermediate transfer belt or of the medium conveyance belt is equal to or larger than an angle formed between a line connecting the center of the developing roller and the contact portion and said parallel drawn line.

20. (previously presented)The electrophotographic apparatus according to claim 19, wherein the toner regulatory blade is made of a spring material, such as SUS, phosphor bronze, or the like, having a good thermal conductivity.

21. (previously presented)The electrophotographic apparatus according to claim 20,

wherein the toner regulatory blade has coating for inhibiting adherence of toner between the contact portion and a mount portion.

22. (previously presented) The electrophotographic apparatus according to claim 15, wherein the tip end part of the developing device is fixed to a body of the electrophotographic apparatus and only the toner storage part of the developing device is detachably mounted in the body of the electrophotographic apparatus.